



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE
GRAND JURY RETURNS INDICTMENTS
IN IDENTITY THEFT CASES

Utah Identity Theft Task Force:
Local, State and Federal Partners
Continue Efforts to Target Identity Theft Crimes

SALT LAKE CITY – A federal grand jury in Salt Lake City returned two indictments Wednesday morning as a part of continuing efforts by the Utah Identity Theft Task Force and its partners to target identity theft crime in Utah. The Federal Trade Commission estimates that as many as 9 million Americans have their identities stolen each year.

The Utah Identity Theft Task Force, organized in the fall of 2004 as a component of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, includes local, state, and federal law enforcement and prosecution agencies. In addition to investigating and prosecuting hundreds of identity theft cases in Utah, the task force also provides training for law enforcement agencies and community members.

“The indictments returned this morning demonstrate our continuing strong commitment to aggressively investigating and prosecuting identity theft cases in Utah. These cases often involve criminal conduct committed in many jurisdictions and the potential for prosecution in state or federal courts. A task force approach brings a variety of assets and expertise to the table to address these crimes,” U.S. Attorney Brett L. Tolman said today.

Eight defendants are charged in a 33-count indictment returned Wednesday morning targeting a loosely-connected group of individuals who the indictment alleges were counterfeiting and cashing checks around the Salt Lake City area. Charged in the indictment are Justine Coppolino, age 38; Richard Siufanua, age 44; Ilaita Eli Tafili, age 35; Irene J. May-Navarro, age 23; Darlene Morris, age 34; Michael Aaron Longshaw, age 24; Michael J. Bue, age 28; and Melynda Jonelle Hairup, age 29. All of the defendants are from Salt Lake City. Coppolino, Morris, Longshaw and Bue are in state custody. Arrest warrants were issued today for the four who are not in custody. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service is the lead investigative agency in the case, assisted by other local, state, and federal partners.

Four other defendants are being prosecuted by the Salt Lake District Attorney’s Office and the Davis County Attorney’s Office.

Federal charges against the eight include conspiracy to commit bank fraud; possession of an implement to make counterfeit securities; possession of identification document-making implement; bank fraud; aggravated identity theft; production of false identification document; and possession of a controlled substance.

Prosecutors believe that as a part of the counterfeiting scheme, Coppolino would select a business name and a logo, in many cases from the phone book. Using VersaCheck software and check stock, she would create a check purporting to be a payroll check from the business, drawn on a real bank or credit union, utilizing a fake check number and account number. In most instances, the bank routing number was correct for the bank the check purported to be drawn on. The authorizing signature on the check appear to be the scanned signature of real people, including a Salt Lake County Deputy District Attorney, the former chairman of the Utah Board of Pardons and Parole, and the chief executive officer of a Utah credit union. She used the names of a variety of businesses in the scheme.

The indictment alleges at least 83 counterfeit checks were made. Most of the counterfeit checks included in the indictment were for amounts around \$500. The majority of checks were cashed by defendants at a local grocery store. Losses in the scheme are around \$70,000. The checks were made payable to Coppolino and other co-conspirators who then used their own identification or fake Utah temporary identification cards to cash the checks.

For example, the indictment alleges Coppolino forged two checks payable to herself and cashed them. One check for \$456.89 purported to be from Fortie'r Jewelers and Gemologists with the scanned signature of a credit union CEO as the authorizing signature. She allegedly also forged a \$491.22 check purported to be from GMC with a scanned signature of a Salt Lake County Deputy District Attorney. Another series of forged checks included two made out to Siufanua which he cashed. One for \$409.65 was purported to be from Gardner Village and another one for \$492.66 from Goff Mortuary, both using the prosecutor's scanned signature. In another count, a forged check for \$485.25 purporting to be from Platt and Associates was made out to May-Navarro using the signature of the former state pardons and parole official.

In a second indictment, Patrick Vaughan Reddish, age 33, of Bountiful, is charged with access device fraud, bank fraud, and aggravated identity theft. The charges in this indictment stem from a burglary in Draper in April 2007.

Among the items stolen during the burglary was a credit card which had not been activated. The card was activated using the victim's social security number. Over the next four days, about \$70,000 in charges were made to the card. The third count of the indictment alleges one transaction made on the card for \$56,511.36 – a transaction used to purchase a 3.17 carat princess cut diamond.

The indictment charges Reddish with violations of federal law in connection with his use of the credit card.

Reddish is not in custody. The U.S. Secret Service is the lead investigative agency in this case with assistance from local, state, and federal law enforcement partners.

The potential penalties for charges in the two cases are:

Bank fraud/conspiracy to commit bank fraud: Up to 30 years; \$1 million fine

Possession of implement to make counterfeit securities: Up to 10 years; \$250,000 fine

Possession of identification document-making implement: Up to 15 years and \$250,000 fine

Aggravated identity theft: 2 years mandatory minimum sentence served consecutive to other sentences. (Second and subsequent counts of conviction may be concurrent or consecutive.)

Production of false identification document: Up to 15 years and \$250,000 fine.

Possession of a controlled substance: Up to 1 year and a \$1,000 fine.

Access device fraud: Up to 15 years and \$250,000 fine.